MSD

District In Need Of Improvement

CULTURE AND CLIMATE PROGRAM

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Introduction

The District Improvement Climate and Culture Team has been meeting monthly since November 2005 with a break for the summer. The purpose of this team is to investigate the culture and climate of the Manchester School District and how it affects student achievement.

The Culture and Climate Team recommends the implementation of the Joyce Epstein six types of involvement to improve student achievement by enhancing the culture and climate of the school district.

The Joyce Epstein School-Family-Community Partnerships model focuses on six primary types of involvement to facilitate in order to support student learning:

1. **Parenting**- Assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.
2. **Communicating**- Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.
3. **Volunteering**- Improve recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs.
4. **Learning at Home**- Involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions.
5. **Decision-Making**- Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, and other parent organizations.
6. **Collaborating with the Community**- Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community.

Research and History Supporting School-Family-Community Partnership Model by Joyce Epstein:
Researchers associated with National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) conducted studies over the past five years on the effectiveness of family and community involvement and its positive contribution to student achievement and other indicators of success in school. Currently, over 1000 schools, 100 districts, and 17 state departments of education are working with NNPS to use research-based approaches like the Joyce Epstein School-Family-Community Partnership Model. For a summary of the NNPS's research supporting this approach see appendix A.

Strategic Planning Program

Goal 1: To create a vision statement for the Manchester School District that includes all stakeholder groups in the process. *Decision Making Key*

The following district-wide vision statement was presented to and accepted by the Board of School Committee prior to the school year 2006-2007.

Through the involvement of our families, educators and the community, the Manchester School District provides a safe, supportive, respectful and engaging learning environment which has high expectations for student achievement and embraces diversity. As a result, each student is prepared to be a responsible citizen, lifelong learner, and contributing member of society.

Goal 2: To create a strategic planning model that ensures a common focus and direction for the Manchester School District. *Decision-Making Key*

A. District Activity
Every five years, the Manchester School District will revise/rewrite the district vision statement. To achieve this we recommend utilizing the suggested method on page 6.

Each school within the district will then engage in the following process in order to achieve the identified district vision.

B. Building Activity
Year 1: Following the Development of the District Vision Statement

Following the approval of the district-wide vision statement each school will develop its own mission statement to meet its specific needs. Please refer to the **suggested** method (on page 6) to involve all staff members, parent organizations, and partnership or community members. Depending on the size of the group, this entire process can be completed within 1-2 hours. Please note that this is a suggested model to be used or modified at the building level.

Year 1,2,3,4 and 5

Once a school has developed its mission statement, it must formalize annual goals which reflect the district's vision and the school's mission statement. Goals will be developed by the building staff using the assessment information available to address areas in need of improvement.

In the fall each year, the principal and the stakeholders will meet to identify/clarify the school's goals for the year and to develop building action plans. Stakeholders include: teachers, non-instructional staff, families and community representatives. Schools may utilize their school advisory committees to coordinate this endeavor.

In the spring, principals will call a meeting at which mission and school goal progress and achievements will be addressed. The data teams will facilitate the process of identifying strengths and areas of growth as well as evaluating progress on existing school goals. New goals can be created at this time.

As required by the district's professional development master plan, each teacher will create individual goals which need to reflect the school's annual goals.

Every five years the district's vision statement will be reviewed and/or revised. Each school will then meet to review its mission statement and to make sure that it remains connected to the district's vision.

<u>Suggested Method of Developing a School Mission Statement</u>

<u>Materials:</u> Chart paper; markers; sticky dots (5 per staff member/participant)

To create the mission statement, consider the following four components on which the district vision is based. (These will change every 5 years depending on the district vision statement) Post on chart paper for all to view.
- Promote student achievement (green dots)
- Character Development (yellow dots)
- Climate (blue dots)
- Professional Development (orange dots)

I. Break into groups of 4-6.
- Each group should generate 3-5 ways to achieve success in each of these 4 areas.

II. Facilitator will compile ideas on chart paper using the above categories.
- Facilitator should look for commonalities and repetitions and compile a combined list of ideas for each category.
- Without discussion, each staff member should choose the most important item in each category.
- Signify by placing a dot next to that idea on each chart.

<u>*NOTE: If this exercise cannot be completed in one setting, break here and continue at the next session.</u>

III. Return to groups.
- Using the most selected item from each category, each group should create a rough draft of a mission statement for the school.

IV. Use the Carousel model.
- Have members count off within the group
- Two members remain at the table.
- Starting with person one, move in a clockwise fashion to the next small group to comment/revise/edit that group's mission statement.
- Every three minutes another group member (2, 3…) will move clockwise to the next group.
- They continue moving at 3 minute intervals in the same direction until everyone returns to their original groups. (It is important that everyone moves at the same time; no sooner, no later.)
- At that point each group will write a final draft of the mission statement using input from the carousel activity. Allow only ten minutes.
- Each group will write the final mission statement on chart paper.

V. Post all final drafts for review.
- Each staff member votes with a dot to indicate which statement best represents the mission for the school.
- Based on the results, the school's mission statement will emerge.
- If necessary, a small committee can write a final revision for staff approval.
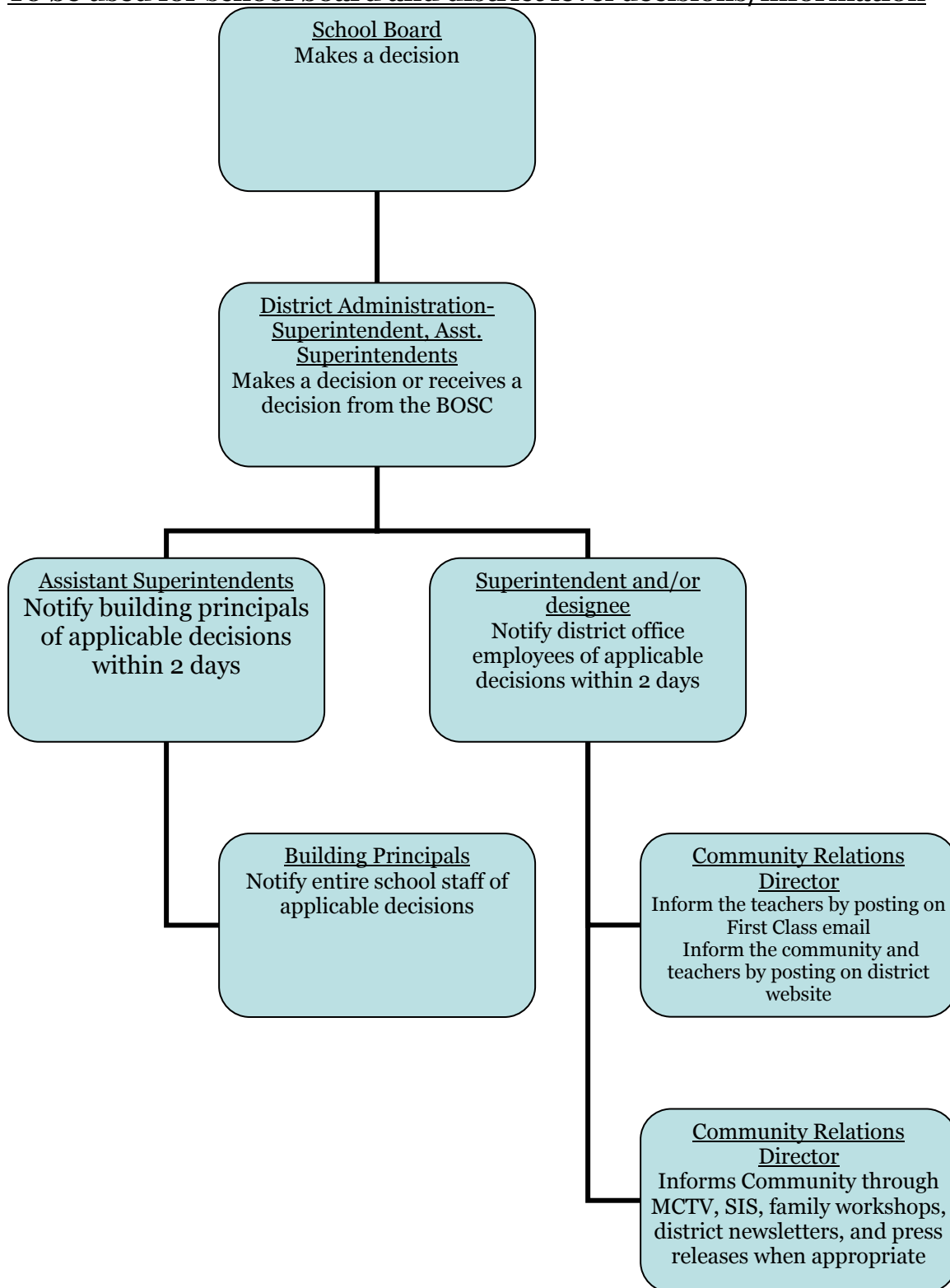
Communication Program

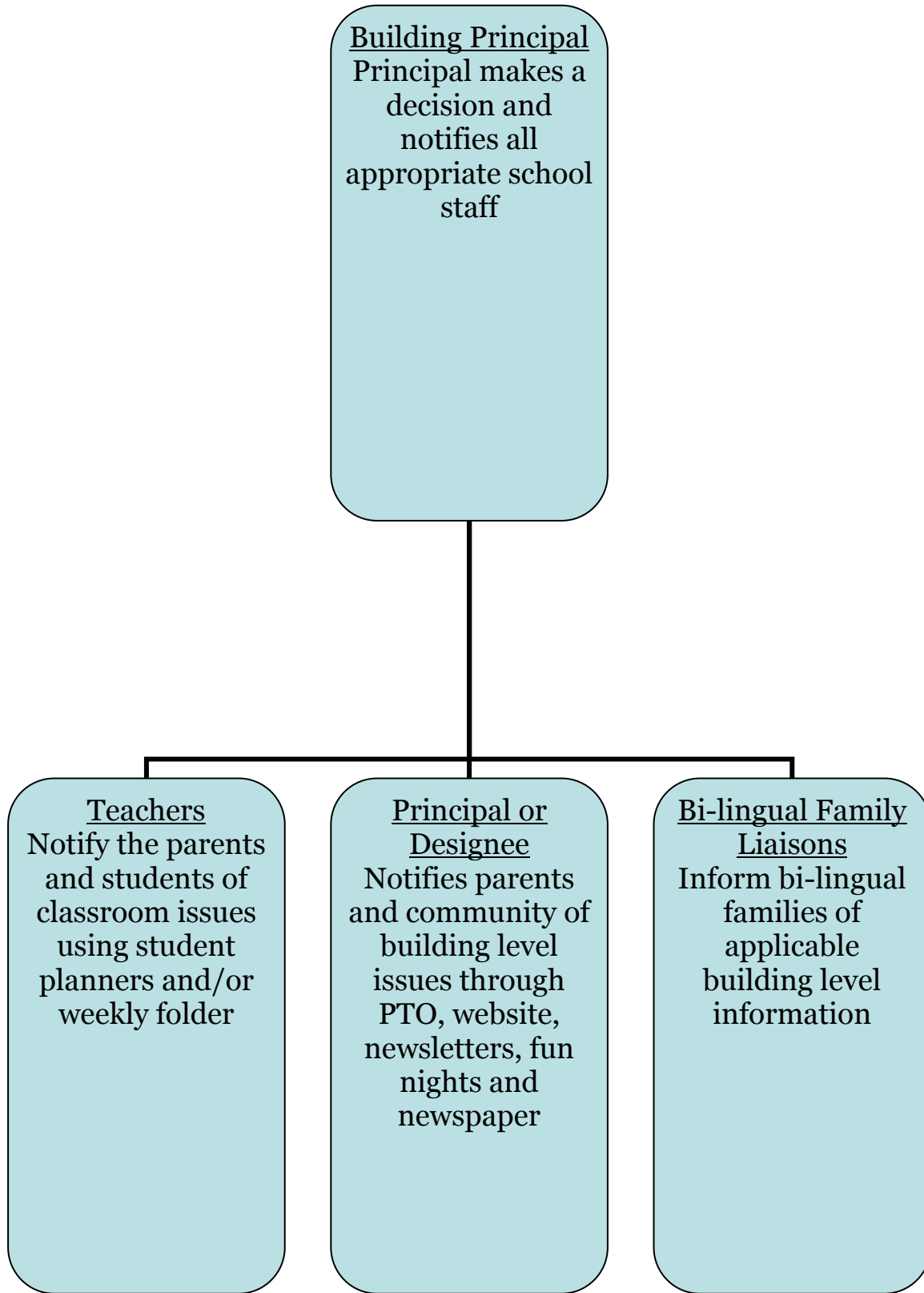## **Goal 1: To create a communication plan for bringing the District Improvement initiatives to all stakeholders.**
Communicating Key

A. Presentation of all District Improvement Plans to Board of School Committee

B. Presentation of all plans to all Manchester School District staff through principals and first class email

C. Two informational sessions with representatives from each district improvement team for any Manchester School District employee wanting additional information

D. Newspaper articles, website and district newsletter highlighting all plans

E. Two community informational sessions with representatives from each district improvement team for community members wanting additional information

Goal 2: Create a communication flow chart for the Manchester School District. *Communicating and Learning at Home Keys*
To be used for school board and district level decisions/information

School Board
Makes a decision

District Administration-
Superintendent, Asst.
Superintendents
Makes a decision or receives a
decision from the BOSC

Assistant Superintendents
Notify building principals
of applicable decisions
within 2 days

Superintendent and/or
designee
Notify district office
employees of applicable
decisions within 2 days

Building Principals
Notify entire school staff of
applicable decisions

Community Relations
Director
Inform the teachers by posting on
First Class email
Inform the community and
teachers by posting on district
website

Community Relations
Director
Informs Community through
MCTV, SIS, family workshops,
district newsletters, and press
releases when appropriate

To be used for building level information/decisions

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                    Building Principal
                    Principal makes a
                       decision and
                        notifies all
                    appropriate school
                          staff
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    Teachers              Principal or           Bi-lingual Family
Notify the parents          Designee                 Liaisons
 and students of         Notifies parents        Inform bi-lingual
 classroom issues       and community of            families of
   using student          building level            applicable
planners and/or          issues through           building level
  weekly folder           PTO, website,            information
                        newsletters, fun
                          nights and
                           newspaper
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Goal 3: Identify communication strategies to implement to improve communication between all stakeholders of the Manchester School Community. *Communicating, Parenting, Learning at Home and Collaborating with the Community Keys.*

The following strategies are suggested to improve communication in five different areas:

Administration to Teachers
1. Utilize First Class email
2. Create uniform faculty handbook district wide that could also be found on First Class
3. Follow communication flowchart found under goal two

Teacher to Teacher
1. Provide time to collaborate with one another
2. Use part of the early release days to meet as departments and/or grade levels

Teacher to Parent
1. Increase the number of parent liaisons
2. Hold open houses off site, with interpreters at varying times
3. Have an updated school resource list
4. Post student homework, grades and attendance online (password protected)
5. Provide workshops on how to communicate effectively with parents and through email

Teacher to Students
1. Provide mandatory assignment planners from grades 3-12 and make it a district policy
2. Post student homework, grades and attendance online (password protected)

School to Community
1. Identify a building level public relations person
2. Continue providing fun nights
3. Contact and visit local gathering areas for groups of individuals in the community
    (ex. churches, immigration centers, boys and girls club, etc.)
4. Utilize MCTV and district website as a communication tool to the community
5. Publish a quarterly district newsletter that is disseminated to all school households
6. Identify a building level public relations person

<u>Decision-Making Program</u>

Goal 1: To investigate the decision-making in the Manchester School District and identify stakeholder desire for involvement. *Decision-Making Key*

The District Improvement Decision-Making Sub-Committee conducted a series of focus groups with principals, teachers and parents of the Manchester School District. Through these focus groups, the sub-committee was able to identify the areas of concern for each group as well as identify their desire for involvement for decision-making within the district. The following vision statement for decision-making was created from this information:

The Manchester School District believes that decision making is an ongoing process in which action needs to be taken to:
> *~ increase student achievement*
> *~ address individual needs or*
> *~ accomplish district goals.*
When decisions are made, all viewpoints are considered, therefore reflecting the collective best interest of the student/s, district staff, and community; they are made and implemented according to a Model for Shared Decision-Making.

This vision statement was the framework for the "Model for Shared Decision-Making and Establishing Advisory Committees" document located under goal number two.

Goal 2: To create a decision making model to be implemented district-wide to improve stakeholder involvement in the district. *Decision-Making and Collaborating with the Community Keys*

A Model for Shared Decision Making And Establishing Advisory Committees

RATIONALE

Much research has been done in the recent past to determine what factors, if any, contribute to or can predict success within a school district. Through that research, it has been repeatedly revealed that data driven decision making is directly correlated with student achievement and thus, district success. Additionally, a recent survey conducted within our own district revealed that much could be done in the area of conscious decision making. A review of the current literature in this area was conducted as well as an examination of the decision making process within other districts who are viewed as highly achieving. Consistently, in organizations who are highly achieving, both in academic and corporate settings, a model of *shared decision making* is being utilized.

Shared decision making is a method of decision making in which all of the stakeholders who will be affected by a decision – whether large or small – have access to the information needed to become informed on the factors involved in the decision, and are afforded the opportunity to voice their informed opinion on that topic prior to a decision being made.

Traditionally, decision making (whether accurate or inaccurate) is viewed as something that occurs "top down" and that the people who are affected by the decisions are merely subject to that decision, without having had their needs or abilities considered. The resulting disempowerment competes with feelings of loyalty to the organization and breeds resentment. As a result, the decision is often not followed as intended or carried out at all.

Most people agree that improving student achievement and well-being is more likely to occur in a positive, consistent environment than in a stressful one. Shared decision making fosters a positive environment where all stakeholders feel valued enough to learn more about their organization and to offer more to their organization as well, in this case, our district.

Shared decision making places the students' developmental and academic needs at the center of the school's agenda, and establishes shared responsibility for their achievement. It also functions as a tool for fostering cohesion among staff, students, and the community. It facilitates the establishment of the school as a community partnership.

The ultimate goal of the decision making process is to devise a win/win solution to a presented problem that accounts for the needs of the stakeholders and is in concert with the mission and overall vision for the district.

THE MODEL

An effective *Shared Decision Making Model* has the following components:

1. ***Establish That a Decision Needs to be Made (Define the Problem)***
2. ***A Decision Making Advisory Committee is Convened***
3. ***The Advisory Committee Assesses the Problem***
4. ***A Decision is Made***
5. ***The Decision is Effectively Communicated***
6. ***The Decision is Reviewed/Evaluated***

It is important for specific consideration to be given to each phase of the decision making process. To be most effective, there are specific criteria for each of the steps, as follows:

1. *Establish That a Decision Needs to be Made*

An advisory committee is established expressly for the purpose of reviewing decisions that need to be made within the district and providing data-driven feedback for consideration previous to that decision being made. The Advisory Committee is a community resource operating for the best interest of the school community.

Decisions that are determined to necessitate the use of the Advisory Committee are posted well in advance of the meeting date in a consistently anticipated format (such as a formal agenda, email, or newsletter). This allows a vested stakeholder the opportunity to address the issue in some fashion (such as by a planned attendance at the meeting).

2. *Utilize an Advisory Committee of Stakeholders*

It has been repeatedly shown that people are more vested in the outcome of a decision, and are additionally more likely to carry out that decision, when the stakeholders of the decision are involved in the decision making process. This can be attributed to the fact that there is more understanding of the purpose of the decision, as well as more understanding about how the decision was reached. As a result, there is less questioning and more support of the decision on the part of the stakeholders. Further, allowing people to see how they benefit from a decision is a good way to get them vested in the outcome of that decision. Additionally, any changes made by a group are preferable to those made by one person, and the possibilities that result from a collective pool of consciousness are greater than that which any one individual is capable of. For a minimum of these reasons, the use of a committee in the decision making process is essential.

<u>The Committee</u>

An Advisory Committee is established that includes representative professional staff, students enrolled in the district, parents of students enrolled in the district, business

representatives, and community members. ***Committee members MUST be stakeholders.***

Professional staff includes, but is not limited to:
Teachers
Paraprofessionals
Related Service Providers
Support Staff

For larger decisions that involve more stakeholders, suggested community members might include:
College faculty of relevant majors of discipline
Refugee or ethnic cultural centers (such as the Latin American Center or The International Institute)
Local business members

The Advisory Committee should include at least 2 community members, selected by a process that provides for adequate representation of the community's diversity.

Logistics

Initial membership in the Advisory Committee is a two year commitment for one-half of the members. Every year, one half of the members change so that no one person other than administrators serves more than 2 years. The remaining committee members are charged with modeling the process for the newcomers. One reason for this is that groups work better when they have familiarity with each other; they are more likely to respect another's point of view and less likely to engage in personality conflicts rather than problem solving.

Additionally, there is an open invitation for stakeholders of a particular issue to participate in the decision making process around that issue. The "shared" aspect of this model requires equal access to information and equal opportunity to ask questions. Committee members should invite stakeholders who are not standing committee members but whom are effected by and have knowledge of the decision being considered (i.e. a food service decision). Stakeholders will not want to be involved in every decision, but assumptions should not be made about which decisions people will deem important. Decision making committees are less effective if any constituency groups are left out of the process. Commitment to a shared purpose requires more than equal access to information; it requires equal access to the decision making process itself.

Advisory committee meetings are held regularly in an expected format in an advertised location. It is important to establish and maintain a schedule of the meetings in order to protect the integrity of the process. Allowing the group to determine method, format, and frequency of meetings will ensure consistent participation.

Since the Advisory Committee serves as a resource to the building administrator, the committee voluntarily meets once in the summer for up to three hours to aid the administrator in evaluating and planning decisions that need to be made previous to the start of the new school year. Compensation would be made according to the district's stipend schedule for any district employees involved.

Roles of Various Members

A key component of the group dynamic is that the group members understand what is expected of them – their roles are made clear at the onset. In a typical shared decision making model, the roles are likely to be as follows:

Role of the Leader/Administrators

The primary task of the Administrator in an Advisory Committee is that of a *leader*. The impetus is on the administrator/leader to foster disciplined inquiry and action on the part of the staff. It is also up to him/her to create an environment for the group process to take place and to arrange for attendance of potential stakeholders. Leaders who make decisions without including the stakeholders of those decisions often find that their efforts are regarded with suspicion or mistrust and are often not followed through. Thus, an essential task of the administrator/leader is to incorporate the right stakeholders into the process. The people involved in decisions may vary from task to task, but the fundamental parameters for determining which stakeholder groups should be involved and how they should be involved should be consistent from the classroom to the boardroom.

The leader is the spearhead of the committee. As such, s/he is expected to cultivate agreement within the group, and to model the tools and attitudes that will create coherence and help the group make decisions. Current literature suggests that the hope for maintaining the vitality of public education may lie in the ability of educational leaders to be successful in this area.

The important thing to remember is that leadership depends more on influence than on authority. To be influential, leaders must exhibit that to them, the voices of all stakeholders are equally valued. The administrator/leader is charged with getting each group member to understand their importance in the process and to the organization as a whole.

(For more information on the actual *process* of facilitating a decision making committee, we recommend Leading through Collaboration – Guiding Groups to Productive Solutions, by John Glasser.)

Role of Advisory Committee Members

Members of the committee are expected to operate as a single decision-making team, not as a group of spokespersons representing constituent groups. (They can, however, bring appropriate feedback to the decision making process.) Members are chosen from

various groups to ensure that decisions reflect the expertise and input of affected groups. Their role is to work together to find good solutions to the educational problems confronting the school or the district and to present them to the administrator/leader for consideration. The administrator weighs the committee recommendations against any federal, state, or district obligations for which s/he is accountable, and utilizes the recommendations whenever possible. If utilized properly, the Advisory Committee is a valuable tool for the administrator to use.

At the district level, formation and utilization of Advisory Committees follows the same principles as throughout the district, especially in terms of providing district administration with the opportunity to consider relevant data and stakeholder input. The Advisory Committee who operates at a district level is not expected to weigh decisions for which consideration is not in the hands of the district administrators.

School Advisory Committees may not be involved in decision-making relating to:
      Collective bargaining
      Federal and State Law (such as IDEA)
      Budget considerations
      Day to day management of the school/district

Role of the School Board

The school board must operate in accordance with the guidelines established by the New Hampshire School Boards Association (*See page 23*). However, as members of the school community, the school board understands and supports the district's shared decision making protocol.

3. *Assess the Problem*

Focus on the Agenda

Ideally, there should be an already-established agenda (as this was a means of establishing attending group members). Begin by clarifying the purpose of the meeting – what are the problems at hand? Establish what is to be accomplished by meeting's end. The goals must be clear for the group process to be efficient. Review the roles of the members, if needed, and be sure the members have a clear outline of their task.

Remember the Vision

Remember that regardless of the level at which a decision is being made, the district as a whole has a vision for all stakeholders in the district. Decisions should be made in accordance with the district's Mission for Decision Making and our Vision for the district.

Search for Solutions

Through a process of brainstorming and discussion, ideas are put on the table around the topic/s at hand. Working as a team affords group members the opportunity to seek first to understand rather than being understood; to benefit from and utilize other's point of view towards a shared goal, and to think in a more progressive manner. Sometimes effective problem solving leads to discovery rather than to a perceived outcome. This discovery develops only from this process; decisions based on this discovery can only result *from* this process. While it is important to respect group members' schedules, it is also important to allow enough time for new insights to unfold. It is possible to devote valuable meeting time to dialogue on the most critical issues as long as there are mechanisms in place that are faithfully accessed for staying in touch with the committee on routine items.

Reaching Agreements

When attempting to reach a decision, use the following three Guiding Principles:

Collaboration - encourages the administrators and teams to work together. Collaboration leads to a level of professionalism that links leading and learning.

No Fault - keeps the focus on problem solving, rather than on people or placing blame. No fault does not mean no accountability; it means EVERYONE becomes accountable.

Consensus - Through dialogue and understanding, build consensus about what promotes student achievement and overall district success. All go with what most think will work, understanding that if it doesn't work, the issue can be revisited and other ideas can be tried. Stakeholders should exhibit the same cooperative problem solving attitudes and behaviors that they expect students to demonstrate in the classroom.

Though you may not be able to gather quantifiable data for every decision, you can take the following steps as a means of leveraging resources toward district priorities:
- Agree on your criteria for success before implementing any program or service review
- Insist on valid and reliable data-gathering techniques
- Report and analyze all data, including unintended learning or effects
- Ensure that data are collected, communicated, and stored in ways that enhance analyses and protect people's privacy

Next, decision makers need to consider how decisions affect the stakeholders. This consideration is part of the process and should not be neglected or the integrity of the process will be negated.

Finally, when making decisions, give consideration to HOW and BY WHOM the decision/s will be carried out.

4. *A Decision is made*

Evaluating the Decision

Were all of the appropriate stakeholders involved in the decision making process? Does the decision meet the collective interests of the group? Is it is aligned with the vision for the district and in accordance with the district's mission for decision making?

Reiterate that which was decided to ensure equal understanding and allow for last minute confusions to be cleared up.

5. *Communicate the Decision*

It is important for any decision that involves a considerable number of stakeholders to be communicated in a manner that is likely to reach the bulk of them. Results coming from the committee should be communicated routinely in a timely manner and in an anticipated medium – email, newsletter, etc. A written document communicates: the decision, those intended to implement the decision, associated deadlines, and expected outcome. This addresses the possibility of decisions not being followed through as a result of ignorance.

6. *Review/Evaluate the Decision*

The decision making process does not end once the decision is made. Periodic and ongoing evaluation and assessment of the effectiveness of a decision is critical. There is no sense in using resources to further a decision that is not the right one; at the same time, there is no reason not to reevaluate a decision; the committee is established and in place on a routine basis to be utilized for this situation. Evaluate progress according to pre-established criteria and address issues in a timely manner.

SUMMARY

A successful decision is one that
> Is a result of collaboration by a committee of volunteers
> Involved stakeholders
> Is data-driven
> Responds to feedback
> Is timely
> Is appropriate and sensitive
> Models democratic ideals
> Is monitored for appropriateness

School communities should
> Be structured to promote shared decision making and a culture of inclusion
> Use data from all levels of the system; student, the district, and the community, to inform

Educational policies and practice
View change as an ongoing process guided by continuous constructive feedback
Promote organizational coherence among school boards, educators, and parents

In some schools that were considered underperforming, it was found that staff was experiencing a level of interpersonal conflict that they felt was impeding their ability to successfully address issues related to student performance. Participation in shared decision making groups allows staff access to each other for communication sharing, opportunities to learn more about the organization, and better insight to each others role in the success of the school environment. Decision making is consistent across organizational structures, and the process reaches beyond school personnel to include students, parents, and other community members so that each recognize the school's role as a partner in promoting and sustaining a quality community and ensuring student achievement.
Suggested Reading:

Sustaining Change in Schools – How to Overcome Differences and Focus on Quality, by Daniel Johnson

Leading Through Collaboration – Guiding Groups to Productive Solutions, by John Glaser

Massachusetts School Council Handbook – Massachusetts Department of Education

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The Role of School Board Member

Even for those new board members who have studied the role of the board and attended numerous board meetings before they ran for election, the reality of school board service can be very different from what they imagined. Like any challenging leadership position in our world today, board service is a learning experience, one that will stretch and grow your leadership skills.

Schools exist to provide appropriate educational opportunities for our children. With this in mind it is vital to maintain children first in the decision making and thinking processes of school board members. This can be difficult as constituents ask for responses and decisions on topics that vary greatly but impact what is often the largest business in a community in New Hampshire, the schools.

A fundamental rule, often not understood by new board members and sometimes not followed by experienced board members, is that they have no authority beyond that exercised at the board table. When the meeting is called to order each member is empowered with the right to vote on each issue. When the meeting is adjourned, that power is gone. Only a majority of the board has the ability to set policy, hire and fire staff, negotiate contracts or make requests of the superintendent. The only employee of the board is the superintendent and he or she is the only school district employee the board may make requests of. The board may empower, with a vote, the chair or subcommittee to take action outside of the board meeting but such power is only given by the full board. In most matters school boards are legislative bodies. The exception to this rule is when a board serves as a judicial body conducting staff or student hearings.

School Board meetings are meetings of the board in public. School Board meetings are not meetings of the public with the board. Your constituents have the right to see board action in public but are not entitled to interrupt the proceedings of the board. Citizens do not have a 'right' to speak at a board meeting. Most boards do allow a reasonable limited amount of time for citizen input at the beginning or end of a meeting. For hot topics a separate public input session for the board to listen to community members opinions is not only appropriate, but to be encouraged.

The board and superintendent form the school district leadership team. The effective functioning of this team requires trust. It does not mean everyone agrees on the issues. In fact, a well functioning team with a high level trust will have vigorous, loud, impassioned discussions over those issues they care greatly about. Trust also means that board decisions will be supported by all board members. To do otherwise reduces team effectiveness and loses respect for the board from the staff and community.

The leadership team should be focused on end results. The board should ask questions of What?, Why?, How Much? and How Well? Board action should be focused on Mission, Goals, Policies, Standards, Advocacy, and Communication. The method the board uses to give direction is that of the vote, at a properly convened meeting of the board as a whole.

Diversity Program

Realizing that diversity has a huge impact upon teaching, learning, and adapting, the purpose of this committee has been to 1) look at how to improve our district public school system from a diversity perspective and 2) make appropriate recommendations.

Committee members developed work plans for five goals:

1. To develop a demographic profile of Manchester School District

2. To develop a diversity policy statement

3. To create a parental/community involvement plan

4. To attract, hire and retain certified, highly qualified people of difference (as defined by Diversity Policy Statement)

5. To develop a diversity supporting professional development program

To develop work plans, committee members utilized the following resources:

Research – the demographic profile was very much influenced by committee phone calls to Lawrence, MA; Seattle, WA; Providence, RI; San Diego, CA and Dade County, FL. Our recommendations for Parental/Community Involvement Plan were based on field trips to Portland, ME and Brockton, MA.

Guest speakers – Our Parental/Community Involvement Plan was impacted by:

o **Honore Murenzi** of the Way Home, a refugee housing agency, and a member of a support group for refugees called New American Africans spoke to us about the struggles faced by African refugees.

o **Tamara Rodriguez Provencher**, a physician from the Dominican Republic, an advisory board member of UNH Manchester and Granite State College, spoke of the needs of the Hispanic Community.

- o **Cat Allard**, Director of Youth and Community Programs at the YWCA, spoke of an organization called Manchester Outright, which provides support to gay, lesbian, transgender, and bisexual youth.

- o **Karen Gerdt**, of the Parent Information and Resource Center talked about the kinds of things teachers and schools do to reach out to parents and thus increase student achievement.

- o **Bernard Keenan** of Granite State College (GSC) presented an overview of programs offered by GSC, one of which would make paraprofessionals highly qualified (HQT). He also explained ways in which people who have college degrees from other countries can start the process to be certified here.

Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce - GMCC has recently solicited pledges from businesses to help Manchester students develop skills to become productive citizens and employees. To this end, businesses have offered to help immigrants, refugees and others transition into Manchester's schools, the community, and employment.

Family Understanding Nights – Some committee members participated in these monthly gatherings for immigrants, refugees, teachers, social workers, interpreters, and staff. For our committee members, the key outcome was gaining a better understanding of the challenges that a resettlement city faces.

David Scannell – With Dave's help, the committee gathered pieces of a diversity policy from the district's Policy Manual. Then, the committee collected data from other cities mentioned above to help develop a Diversity Policy of its own. Committee members also worked closely with Dave to develop a demographic profile of the Manchester School District of today.

GOAL 1: To Develop A Demographic Profile of The Manchester Public School District.
Communicating Key

Please see Appendix B: Manchester Schools at a Glance

GOAL 2: To Develop A Diversity Policy Statement.
Collaborating with the Community Key

Diversity Policy
Manchester Public Schools

Manchester Public School District, recognizing and respecting the diversity and needs of our students, fosters an organizational and educational climate that maximizes the benefits of Manchester's diversity as part of a global society.

The school district's concept of diversity encompasses nationality, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, age, religion, sexual orientation, ability/disability, language, educational level, and occupational background.

This policy is based on the assumption that students will succeed academically when:

- They experience a safe, nurturing, and respectful environment
- They learn how to interact with others who reflect the diversity of contemporary American society
- Their teachers understand, respect and respond to diverse perspectives
- Their families feel welcome in the schools

Note: The intent of the diversity policy above is to help the Manchester Public School District achieve its vision (please see below). The vision statement and diversity policy need to be mutually reinforcing.

Vision
Manchester Public Schools

To provide safe, healthy, nurturing and respectful environments in which all students have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills that will enable them to become life-long learners as well as positive and productive citizens. The success of our schools can only be achieved through collaboration and interdependence with the community. The District is committed to utilizing all resources towards this exciting challenge.

Goal 3: To Create A Family/Community Involvement Plan. *All Six Keys*

Strategy #1: Commit city resources to create and expand positions to implement the strategies within this plan

TASKS

Create structure for the following positions:

- Create full time Community Culture and Climate Director position
- Expand the existing part-time Bi-Lingual Family Liaisons to full-time positions

Strategy #2: Implement Joyce Epstein's School-Family-Community Partnership model and expand use from Title 1 schools to entire district

TASKS

- Establish and maintain district and school level memberships in National Network of Partnership Schools to experience best practices, problem solving advice, etc.*

- Train/educate a School Board member at National Network of Partnership Schools Conference. S/he would bring back training ideas to the district which would involve administrators and specialists

- Identify policies, procedures, and action steps for district (School Board, administrators, and specialists)*

- Allocate time for district-wide training on the Joyce Epstein Model for Family Liaisons, School Board members, administrators, specialists

Strategy #3: Create more diversity within teaching staff

TASKS

- Encourage and grow parents into paraprofessionals (EAs)
- Encourage and grow paraprofessionals into teachers and interpreters
- Encourage and grow teachers into administrators
- Have a certification program in coordination with local colleges (scholarships available through Granite State College)

Strategy #4: Involve non-instructional staff to support curriculum, culture, and student success

TASKS

- Encourage non-instructional staff to be visibly supportive and welcoming. This would include administrative assistants, volunteers, bus drivers, food service workers, before and after school program staffs, SRO's, day porters, crossing guards, nurses, parents, and School Board members
- Involve non-instructional staff in advisory committees

Strategy #5: Educate all stakeholders on Code of Conduct

TASKS

- Modify language of Code of Conduct for clarification, and educate teachers, staff, students, and parents accordingly
- Provide specialized instruction on code of conduct for students of diversity as needed
- Provide opportunities to address and remediate problem behavior
- Increase access to Code of Conduct and Handbook by:
    - Condense, summarize and translate into at least the five most common languages
    - Produce in Braille, large print and audio formats

Strategy #6: Consider ways for the school district to work with the business community to help (financially or otherwise,) immigrants, refugees, and others.

TASKS

•School district will follow up with various business initiatives, for example:

- Drivers Education: Teachers and interpreters are needed
- International Institute: Help in achieving their mission
- Mentoring new employees in their new jobs
- Encouraging business employees to help immigrants & refugees on company time
- Advising new employees and their families about lead paint hazards
- Establishing a panel of business people who can talk with immigrants & refugees about such topics as:
  - o Importance of education
  - o Don't drop out
  - o Reasons to stay in school

- Establishing a forum where ethnic communities can learn from each other
- Forming a committee that would supervise a grant pool (incl grant proposals and grant pool maintenance) to accommodate ongoing community needs. This pool can be featured on a web site
- NHBSR (New Hampshire Business for social Responsibility) can solicit business pledges via its website and request fulfillment help from Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce
- The Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce (GMCC), via the Business/Education committee has already received pledges from 11 businesses to help out in three key areas :

•Support Family Understanding Nights
- Portrait Design Photography
- Ladouceur and Latouche Plumbing & Heating
- Elliot Health System

•Encourage businesses to hire students without diploma who are working on finishing high school
- University System of NH

•Speak to students and parents about employment
- C.R. Sparks
- PSNH
- NH Minority Health Coalition
- Ladouceur and Latouche Plumbing & Heating
- University System of NH
- Portrait Design Photography
- Red Oak Property Management

•In addition, Committee members are requesting GMCC's help in lobbying for better lead paint laws, a topic which people from other countries know little about.

•Assist pharmacies, with the help of interpreters, to distribute a multi-lingual fact sheet recommending what over-the-counter drugs can be taken for the most common maladies

•Expand English, citizenship, and computer classes for parents through the school district and/or at the place of work

GOAL 4: To Attract, Hire, and Retain Certified, Highly Qualified Teachers, Administrators and Support Staff Of Difference* In Order To More Accurately Mirror The Student Body.

* difference (as defined by diversity policy statement)

Strategy #1 To Attract Applicants

TASKS

- Use good, effective materials (brochures, video, testimonials) to educate potential applicants that southern New Hampshire, particularly Manchester, has a diverse population

- Encourage applicants of difference from the Manchester community

- Target and canvass colleges with educational programs that have large, diverse student bodies and many international students

Strategy # 2 To Hire Applicants

TASKS

- Encourage administrators, school-based hiring committees and Human Resources to commit to hiring educators and staff of difference

- Create training programs and opportunities to enable in-house staff to advance

- Encourage family liaisons to look for parents who want to enter the system, starting at para-professional level or higher, as appropriate

Strategy # 3 To Retain Staff

TASKS

- Provide ongoing multicultural competency training for all employees
- Encourage employees of difference to solicit help from mentors and other support staff as appropriate
- Make people of difference a part of the entire community of the school

Goal 5: To Develop A Professional Development Program. *Learning at Home and Decision-Making Keys*

Strategy #1 Facilitate certification of teachers of difference

TASKS
- Encourage people with college degrees from other countries to have their credentials evaluated by the Center for Educational Documentation in Boston
- Partner with Granite State College to enable paraprofessionals and other candidates to become certified teachers

Strategy #2 Train all teachers, administrators, and support staff to become multiculturally competent

TASKS
- Evaluate current professional development program
- Access available resources for diversity training
- Open training to the business community and volunteers
- Evaluate training needs and programs on an ongoing basis

CONCLUSION

Human Resource Implications of
Diversity Committee Strategic Plan

The Diversity Committee proposes that the full time position of Community Culture and Climate Director be created. S/he will:

- Coordinate professional development in the area of MSD diversity initiatives;

- Develop and coordinate various multi-lingual means of communication (regular newsletter, MCTV, ethnic festivals, web-site, chamber newsletter, etc.);

- Ensure that the regular newsletter would highlight the positives, the people and programs, upcoming trainings and "things needed" in the schools. It could go out to businesses, parents, and the community;

- Work with HR to attract, hire and retain diverse, highly qualified staff;

- Update and keep district demographics;

- Be an active presence in the community (multi-cultural committee, etc.); and

- Manage the implementation of all the strategies outlined in this plan.

The Diversity Committee has appreciated and enjoyed the opportunity to develop this plan and to support and promote the achievement of Manchester students. As mentioned in the introductory section, it has conducted research (telephone surveys, on-line work, and field trips), and used a myriad of resources to formulate its recommendations. Its motivation has been sparked by the fall 2004 Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce's Education Project. Research within this recent project showed that the public perceives the Manchester School District's diversity to be its greatest strength. Unfortunately, the public also views diversity to be the district's greatest weakness. For this reason, our committee has addressed the downside of diversity head-on.

With this plan's approval and implementation, student achievement will be impacted in a very positive way. Further, as teachers, staff, students, community and parents strengthen their partnership, they will value Manchester's "real world education" all the more.